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United States Senate

The Honorable Christine Wilson
Commissioner
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20580

August 12, 2020

Commissioner Wilson:

I am writing today to follow up on our discussion of right to repair at the recent Senate Commerce Committee Hearing, "Oversight of the Federal Trade Commission." I ask that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) continue to examine the importance of right to repair to consumers, but particularly to folks in production agriculture. Protecting the right of Montana farmers and ranchers to repair their own equipment is critical to keeping the operation running smoothly, and keeping input costs low.

Right to repair is the ability of a consumer to access product service manuals, guides, diagnostic equipment, parts, and software necessary to repair equipment. Right now, everything from smartphones to tractors require diagnostic software and equipment to make repairs. However, I believe that it is critically important to differentiate the two from a policy perspective. A smartphone and a combine are not the same, and if we continue to lump the two together when developing right to repair policy, rural America will bear the brunt of the impact.

When my wife and I took over the family farm in the 1980's, you could pop the hood on a tractor and fix it on the spot. As technology continues to advance, it is more and more difficult to fix your own equipment. Right now, dealer-certified shops have a corner on the market for tractor repairs, hurting the ability of both the farmer and local repair shops to fix equipment in the field. Right to repair could be an important tool, but only if the policy is carefully targeted and not overly broad. Especially as farmers across Montana are harvesting their crops, it is critically important that they have the ability to fix their equipment in a timely and cost-effective manner.

That's why I ask that the FTC begin to take steps to address right to repair, and to ensure that this policy works for agriculture and Montana. I appreciate your time and consideration, and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

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